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ADDRESS

TO THE

CITIZENS OF NEW-YORK,

WHO ASSEMBLED IN THE BRICK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

TO CELEBRATE THE

TWENTY-THIRD ANNIVERSARY

American Independence.

By SAMUEL L. MITCHILL,
 of the City of New-York.

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New-York, 15th July, 1799.

CITIZEN,

WE are deputed in behalf of the *General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen*; the *Tammany Society*, or *Columbian Order*; the *Democratic*, and *New-York Coopers' Society*, to present you their united thanks for your *Oration*, delivered before them on the 4th inst. the *Anniversary of American Independence*, and to request of you a copy of the same for publication.

With respect,

We are your friends
and fellow citizens,

William King, Mechanic Society.
John P. Pearfs, . . . } Tam. Society, or
Corns. C. Van-Alen, . } Columb. Order.
John Mersereau, . . Democrat. Society.
John Utt, Coopers' Society.

TO DR. SAMUEL L. MITCHILL.

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ADDRESS.

Citizens! Republicans! Friends!

IT is a laudable custom, which some part of the human race has adopted, of setting apart anniversary days for the commemoration of great or interesting events. It has been believed or found, that there is some exercise of the understanding, some association of ideas, favorable on the celebration of such times and seasons, to the happiness of those who engage in it. This disposition to increase pleasurable emotion, has accordingly been frequently indulged in private life. For this reason it seems to be, that some individuals, who conceive their birth to be an event worth rejoicing at, devote the anniversary of the day on which it happened, to feasting and mirth. And some of those who consider their *nuptial union* as a subject of lasting joy, are fond of bringing to recollection, once at least in a twelve-month, the transactions of their *wedding day*. — The annual observance of appointed days, has, for a similar reason, been enjoined by synods and churches. And thus it is that the *nativity*, the death and the *resurrection* of *Christ*, are, among some of the professors of his religion, brought occasionally to mind, and made the theme of particular contemplation. A larger number of human beings employ something more than common salutation and greeting on the first day of January, when, according to the generally received computation of time, they enter the threshold of the

new year. Nor have governments and legislatures been wanting in their attention to the setting apart and keeping of particular days.

THUS, in England, the celebration of the 5th of November in a particular manner was calculated to foster the averfion of the nation to popery, and to ftrengthen what was called the proteftant intereft. The obfervance, and with particular ceremonies too, of the day when the firft Charles, named Stuart, though fince dignified with the titles of faint and martyr, was put to death, is calculated to infpire a hatred of political revolutions, and to cherifh a reverence for monarchy. And the devoting the birth day of their fovereign to the feaft, the fong and the dance, has a powerful effect in conciliating their tempers to his perfon and family, and oppofing the machinations of any pretender to the throne.

FOR the purpose of *commemorating* and *celebrating* what is deemed in this land a great, an interefting event, is this body of citizens now affembled; to withdraw themfelves a little from the ordinary concerns of life, and reflect upon that *declaration of their representatives in the continental Congress, whereby they afferted and finally obtained their Independence*. You are all agreed that the acquirement of this *Independence*, is a bleffing. Then it becomes you to be thankful for it; and it is equally incumbent on you to preferve it, and to permit no one to take it away from you or even to in-
croach upon it.

INDEPENDENCE!—This is a high-founding word; and to one who confiders what a feeble, oftentimes what a miserable, and always what a dependent creature man is, it is curious, and it will be ufe-
ful to in-

quire what sort of *Independence* this is which the people of these States declare that they possess, and which they boast of so loudly.

As to the general influence of light, heat, and the physical elements, which compose and actuate the universe and every part of it, these citizens are as dependent on them, as any other denomination of mortal men.

IN like manner are they dependent upon that intellectual, designing and organizing power, which gave law to the atoms of which natural beings are composed, and assigned to each its sphere of action, its relations and affinities. This power they ought always to acknowledge, and not affect in the wantonness or the folly of their limited intellects, to doubt of its superintending providence, or to deny, with the modern epicureans, the existence of its influence. It is a sign of great weakness, and I suspect of depravity, for a people to declare themselves independent of the great governing principle in nature.

BUT you have declared that you possess *Political Independence*; and that your confederacy consists of *free, sovereign, and independent States*. But your bare declaration did not make the thing so. Still, as the government of that country on which you were dependent as provinces and colonies, at length agreed to your declaration, you were emancipated from your civil bondage, and were gradually acknowledged by the sovereigns of different countries on the globe, as fit to be classed among their number.

THE meaning, then, of the term *Independence*, is, that you are not, any longer, dependent on Great-Britain.

It does not refer to other countries, because you never were dependent on them. Thirteen subordinate governments, situated along the Atlantic coast of North America, and forming parts of the British Empire, were thus severed from the political power which claimed them, and put in a condition to undertake the arduous business of self-government.

As the slave, who, after years of wrangling and contention with his master, at length obtains a manumission, is watched by his neighbors to learn how he behaves himself in his new situation; or, as the minor, escaping from the tutelage of parents and guardians, is looked at by his acquaintances, that they may judge how his lately acquired freedom influences his moral and religious conduct; so was the attention of the civilized world fixed on this land, in which thirteen discontented servants of the British household, were discharged from their obligations and connections at once, and turned out together to provide for themselves.

THEY had at a very early day discovered that *absolute Independence* was neither desirable nor to be obtained. Unless therefore, they could depend upon each other, they found they never could become *independent* of Great-Britain. They of course came to an agreement, expressed in very vague and general terms, to stand by each other in the quarrel, and be friends forever after. Although the articles of this confederation were put together in a hurry, and in a time of danger too, they answered tolerably well the purpose for which they were intended, until an accommodation with the common enemy, loosened the bonds

of their compact with each other, and left every member at leisure to consult his own private views and interest. This will appear from a view of the state of society between the peace of Paris in 1783, and the adoption of the federal constitution of 1787.

At first, a greater part of the States conducted themselves in such a manner as to make it evident, they meant to be as much as possible independent of their own late friends and immediate neighbors. And the old articles of association had been so far violated, that they possessed really very little of obligatory power. A system of jealous and illiberal policy, was forming in different parts of the American territory, which threatened dissolution to the little government there was, and anarchy throughout society. The same temper which one State manifested toward another, was exhibited by the citizens respectively towards the governments under which they dwelt. There was a backwardness to pay debts, to perform contracts, and to do public spirited and generous acts. Individuality and selfishness had taken hold of so many members of society, that a refusal to furnish quotas for the public service, and a stamping upon paper the real value of gold and silver, and the passing of laws for the immediate and personal benefit of the representatives, to the almost total disregard of the interests of their constituents, had become transactions of frequent occurrence; — such was the progress of these dissocial notions of independence. Our country would first be independent of Great-Britain; then, each State would be independent of each other; next, every inhabitant would be as independent as possible of his government; and lastly, the members of society be equally independent

of each other. Sentiments of distrust and malevolence had gone so far as to disfigure society with somewhat of the ferocious air of barbarism. Had these ideas been carried further, they must have terminated in the lawless and capricious liberty prevalent among savages, or the sullen, worthless and perfect independence enjoyed by hermits in their caves.

BUT before practical independence had been carried to these lengths, the inconveniences endured in society, had taught our people, that *human happiness was of a social quality, and best promoted and secured by an attention to the relation arising from the mutual wants and dependences of men.*

SUCH were the first essays of this liberated people, in government. The history of legislative proceedings in every State in the Union, evinces numerous regulations of a local and partial kind, inadequate to the great purposes of general good, and frequently defective or erroneous, from a want of knowledge and experience in the citizens, what it best behoved them to do.

IT had been expected by many benevolent and speculative men, that these American governments were to exhibit a beautiful, instructive and successful example of republican principles operating upon a great scale. They seem to have believed a new reign of *virtue and justice* about to be established on earth. Their imaginations becoming enthusiastic on a favorite subject, had presented to them several millions of men, separated by an ocean from all connection with Europe, and surrounded on the land side by a country still in a state of nature, growing up peaceably and

by themselves, in the practice of every *private and public virtue*. Here, they fondly believed, proof demonstrative would be afforded, to the confusion of all doubting aristocrats and unbelieving monarchists, that representative and democratic governments were the best in the world. On this continent, in short, the people of the Eastern Hemisphere were to behold as from a vast amphitheatre, the inhabitants of the West, constructing their governments by plans as they constructed their houses, realizing the projects and schemes of the *Philosophers*, and reducing to practice the theories and visions of the *Sages*.

THERE is something so agreeable to the mind in all this, that perhaps every person who has not been taught otherwise by observation and experience, dwells with delight on the contemplation of human excellence and perfectibility. He pictures new *Edens*, blooming in the desarts, modern *Paradises* overspreading whole islands and continents, and their inhabitants occupied solely in the works of *innocence and peace*. Even HE who addresses you, in *his* days of youth and inexperience, looked with as much ardor as any of them all, for the fulfilment of some of these expectations. Judge then, with what reluctance, what repugnance, what anguish, *his* own acquaintance with mankind forced him to abandon one fine and glittering notion after another, until almost the whole, after having been detected to be delusions, were discarded from *his stock of practical knowledge*.

FOR, he became fully satisfied, that man was a very different being from that *pure, upright, disinterested and virtuous* creature, which the framers of hypotheses

upon his nature and government had supposed him to be; but, on the contrary, as his sense of real *wants* and *necessities* made him in “some degree” dependent on his neighbors, so a misinterpretation or abuse of the relations thence proceeding, led him to the commission of *wrongs* and *injuries*, by depending “too much” upon them.

MAN thus becomes a rapacious and overbearing animal, prone to take to himself the property of another; fond of subjecting to his own controul the will of another. This temper is moulded up with the clay of which he consists; it is nourished by the breath which he draws; it flicks to him until the sand of his hour-glass is run out. In saying this, I am not peevishly calling him a *Centaur*, or by any other monstrous appellation. The simple denomination of the animal I am describing, is MAN.

A COLLECTION of such creatures as these, discover that, with all the imperfections and vices of their nature, they can live better in *society* than in *solitude*. But knowing that each member of the association has a portion of the devil in the flesh, they find it necessary to lay down rules for preventing the injustice, and redressing the wrong, which every person is liable and likely to receive from those who may choose to molest him. This constitutes the business of *legislation*; and the carrying legislative regulations in effect, may be termed *government*. When a people have little or nothing to do in forming the governmental regulations under which they live, they are said to be governed by others; when, on the other hand, their laws are enacted and enforced by their own body or their representatives,

they are said to govern themselves. The former are *despotic*, the latter *free* governments.

GREAT disputes have arisen, which of the two forms is preferable. Both sides of the controversy have had their advocates and champions. The weight of reason and argument is undoubtedly in favor of the right of men to govern themselves; and yet the practice of a major part of the human species at all times, has been directly the contrary; surrendering the reins and putting them into the hand of another.

THERE is one case, indeed, in which a despotic government will by every one be conceded to be the best. And this is where the governing power is incomparably more wise and virtuous than the beings to whom rule is given. A sovereignty, therefore, in which *perfect goodness* was blended with *irresistible strength*, would quell the turbulence of human dispositions, repress unjustifiable attempts of each upon the other, and effect a heavenly establishment upon earth,

BUT man either refuses such a government, if offered him, and rebels against it; or declares that he knows of no such sovereign, to take the management and administration of civil and criminal affairs. He therefore spurns at all pretensions set up by beings, call them Kings, Princes, or what you please, not *less imperfect*, and to the full as vicious as himself, and treats their authority as an *usurpation* of the privileges of their fellow men, and as founded in *violence* and in *fraud*. What right has my more strong or crafty neighbor to lord it over me?

SINCE, then, it is the lot of man to live in society, and since the strong will oppress the weak, and the cunning take advantage of the simple, it has been found deducible from experience, that the great object for which legislative government is founded, *was to provide for the protection of all, against the physical force and beguiling stratagems of all.*

IN adjusting the mode of carrying this provision into effect, there has been a display of the whole corporeal and intellectual force of man. And in proportion as the governing power has acquired more or less ascendancy over the body of the people, have they been subjected to an *absolute* sway, where all they had to do, was to obey, or to a *mixed* authority, in which some influence of their own tempered the will of their masters.—In settling the question, who should *dictate* and who *submit*, the greater part of the wars which have distracted society, have been undertaken, in every period of history. In the greater part, the body of inhabitants have either *surrendered their privileges* in a considerable degree to the few, or the few have been successful in *wresting them away*. This change has, however, in many instances, been progressive and gradual; human beings frequently require a great while to be taught; they are fitter to be governed by others than to govern themselves.

THE forms of government you have adopted, on the setting up of *Independence*, was that of *Representative* or *Democratic Republics*. And these, it was said by political philanthropists, were to exhibit more talents, more virtue, more justice, more every thing that was good, than had ever been brought into operation

before. And this, I fondly hope, the experience of this country will realize.

YET, I apprehend there have been some mistakes generally entertained concerning republics and republicans. By the latter term, I mean not this or that party among them, but the collective body of their citizens.

THUCIDYDES, who wrote with the fidelity of an oracle of truth, has given such a description of popular rage and fury, in the republics of ancient Greece, as almost makes one weep to read it. The energy of the Greek language, directed by the mind of such an historian, was scarcely adequate to convey an idea of the unbridled licence and enormity of their conduct. And this man did not compile from ancient records, or from fancy; he noted the manners of his own times, and described his own countrymen, acute indeed and intelligent, but unruly, perfidious and ungovernable, as they were.

THIS character given by Thucydides has been very little regarded. It contains too much truth and candor to tickle the ears; and I came not here to tickle the ears of any man. But a sophism or false maxim of Montesquieu has been much dwelt upon, and quoted as a high authority on the subject. Because the writer had expressed in his book, that *Virtue was the governing principle of a democratic or popular government*, it has been taken for granted by that class of his readers, that really republicans were a more virtuous class of beings than other folks.—He had been nearer the mark, had he said the principle of a republic was suspicion or distrust, bottomed upon high notions of personal importance.

FROM this idea of self-importance proceed several traits of republican character, which are verified by all history and observation.

1st. *It is prone to pride.* The man who possesses great personal independence, and attaches a high value to the enjoyment of it, naturally enough feels proud of his privileges, and considers himself as a being of much consequence. Republicans, therefore, easily persuade themselves they, as *free citizens*, are of a better order than the subjects of monarchies. Such a sentiment is the natural consequence of the doctrine that every individual *is a sovereign*, or at least possesses a *portion of the sovereignty*.—This should be counteracted by inculcating habits of moderation and respect for others, in the education of youth.

2d. It is given exceedingly to perversion and misrepresentation. That freedom of speech and of the press so much contended for in republican governments, is employed more than half the time in uttering and disseminating falsehoods of various sorts. Fabrications constantly mislead and perplex the mind. Misstatements beguile and lead astray even those who are serious seekers after truth. The contriving and spreading false news, grows to be a considerable branch of business. Satire and invective, on account of their poignancy, are relished better than any other sort of composition. And this depraved habit of mind gives to many the highest gratification, when meditating the destruction of a *private* or a *public* character. What adds to the mass of misrepresentation is, that to defeat the object of one set of lies, there must be an equal quantity of counter-lies put in circulation. The conse-

quence of which is, that when any thing is heard, the first impression it makes is that of a falsehood; to be received as true, further proof is required. Thus lying is the rule; and a solitary truth now and then, forms the exception. The mint where this sort of circulating medium is coined, is night and day at work; the amount of pieces issued among the people is incalculable, and it is very peculiar, that whether the material is noble or base, fair or unfightly, light or heavy, the stamp of falsehood never fails to impress a value and give it currency.—This propensity ought to be opposed by training up young persons to the practice of candor and honesty, to the utter rejection of all cunning and duplicity.

3d. *It is often engaged in the strife of parties.* Whether governments are administered by usurpers or by duly elected representatives, there is always found to be a class of disappointed, or envious, or querulous persons, who amuse themselves with finding fault with almost every thing that is going on. And it is not an unfrequent occurrence, that the number of the discontented is nearly an equal part of the society. It sometimes happens too, that the majority really behave foolishly or wickedly, and then their opponents have good cause for blame. Now and then the balance of party, which is kept near a poise, nods a little one way or the other, and the contending bodies by turns preponderate. If the grumbling party succeeds, then all, in their estimation, goes well; but they who have failed in their projects of preferment and ambition, then treat the new administration with the same reproach and censure with which they were galled before. Generally speaking, all this noise proceeds less from a regard for any thing morally or politically good, than a struggle be-

tween a parcel of high-minded republicans, who shall get the upper hand; who shall possess the ruling power.—In these contentions, it but too often happens, that rancors and bitterness are let loose upon society, and neighborly civilities interrupted by crimination and malice. It is a pity that the exercise of freedom leads to all this; but there seems to be no method of helping it, until man shall be new modelled or born again.

4th. *It delights to meddle in other peoples affairs.*

The orator Demosthenes upbraided the Athenians for going about the streets, asking each other “What news?” when they ought to have been employed in more important matters: and it was remarked by *St. Paul* when he was there, that the same people and the strangers who were at Athens, spent their time in nothing else “but either to tell or to hear some new thing.” And this restless and inquisitive republic, was always interfering in the concerns of the surrounding nations. One while the prevailing party would wage war with Xerxes, or send a detachment to assist the younger Cyrus in ascending the throne of Persia; at another time the king of Egypt had left an unsettled government, and the ever-ready Athenians must go and regulate the succession of his crown. Now, expeditions must be undertaken to subdue or colonize the shores of Thrace; and then again their meddling enterprize will build new cities and establish other governments, situation of the ancient people, along the coasts of Sicily. They were at intervals, engaged in bloody and inveterate civil wars with Argos, Corinth, Sparta and Thebes; and when they had no foreign strife to engage in, they would quarrel, abuse, ostracise and murder each other. Their intestine divisions and their venality, finally made

them a prey to the tyrant of Macedonia.—I have been the more particular in stating these parts of the Athenian conduct, that I might shew what an ancient republic truly was, as well as make it evident, that the same intermeddling and impertinent spirit has invariably influenced similar forms of government in all succeeding times.

WHAT has been observed of this celebrated state of Greece, is in some degree true of all the commonwealths, both above and below the isthmus of the Peloponnesus; though I think, upon the whole, none was quite so bad as Athens. The same perverse and reprehensible temper of intermeddling with their neighbors affairs, distinguishes the public conduct of *Rome* and *Carthage*.—To pass over less memorable examples, is not the republic of France a case in point? As the states of Belgium, of Flanders, of Switzerland, of the Grisons, and of Italy, have already sunk beneath her strokes; while Portugal, Spain, Austria, Russia, and the Germanic empire itself are threatened with revolutions; and where, through the whole space from Britain to ~~Belgium~~^{Spain}, it is proclaimed that a new order of things is to commence.

Is there not something of the like disposition in another republic, situated many degrees nearer the setting sun than the one just described, or than the Atlantic Island of Plato? Does she not make the ocean which separates her from these scenes of confusion, but a more commodious and rapid means of intercourse with the states of Europe? Does she not enter into friendships and quarrels with the same temper and spirit, as nearly as circumstances will permit, that other

republics have done? Do not her citizens call themselves great, powerful and enlightened? Are they not also vain, restless and ambitious, like other free people? Are they not grasping at the wealth of the four quarters of the earth, and preparing to fight and destroy all who interrupt them in the acquirement of it? And in addition to the existing engagements, are not overtures of *some sort*, making or made with the Sultan of the Asias, and the Czar of the Russias? It is deemed ignoble for a people who think of themselves as that people thinks, to enjoy the pittance of a country the mere garden spot embraced by the Mississippi, the St. Lawrence and the Atlantic, and the trifles it affords for the cultivator or manufacturer; yes, they must burst from their land of inglorious ease and retirement, and prove to indifferent or forgetful Europe, *their flag, too, can ride triumphant over the waves, and their guns also strike terror into their foes.*—It is a problem not yet solved in politics, to make republicans stay at home and confine themselves to their own business.

5th. *It is notorious for ingratitude.*—Distinguished merit or excellence in republics, always begets an extraordinary portion of envy; though the invidious man himself admires and acknowledges the distinguished and excellent qualities which he hates. In a free government, where so many of the inhabitants are competitors, and vie with each other for all places of honor and profit, the disappointed candidates frequently feel somewhat of spleenic sourness towards their successful rivals: and when a man goes out of office, and thereby loses his importance, it gives to abundance of the citizens considerable pleasure to behold the magistrate or the legislator reduced to the common level. Has he

acted faithfully in the fields of war and worn himself out in campaigning? Too often has it happened that *poor and unsupported veterans* have suffered in neglect. Has he toiled in the legislature, in a judiciary, or an executive office, and grown grey with employment? He is probably dismissed as dull or superannuated, and told, when he receives his last quarter's salary, the republic has no further need of his services, and he must help himself for the future as well as he can. Has he equitable claims upon the public benevolence or bounty? He is told that the State is poor, the finances low, the treasury exhausted, and that really, if the funds were in a better condition, it is very questionable whether a due regard to economy would not prevent the representatives from voting money for such purposes.—Amid the succession of new sovereigns who administer by turns the public affairs, though the most distinguished services are performed, hardly any body feels any thing more than a faint sentiment of approbation, terminating, *perhaps*, in a vote of thanks. The stern and genuine republican principle is, that the *citizen has done no more than his duty, and he ought not to have an extraordinary requital for that.*—A little empty praise might be expected by the meritorious petitioner, but that republican economy inculcates to be sparing even of *that.*—Since the shells doomed *Aristides the just* to banishment, and the hemlock devoted *Socrates the good* to death, republics have labored under this cruel imputation, which it is yours, by a generous and liberal conduct, to wipe away.

SUCH is the native temper of *republican man*, in ancient as well as modern days. A people actuated by motives like these just enumerated, were to establish

in America and support more than a dozen different governments, and afterwards to confederate the whole, for certain general purposes, into one. When all things are fairly taken into account and considered, I think they have done wonders. More of a spirit of compromise and accommodation was manifested in framing and ratifying the *federal constitution*, than I recollect to have been shewn in any analagous case, through the whole course of history.

IT appears then, that besides the above-mentioned *dependence upon your neighbors*, the *physical constitution of nature*, and *your God*, that you depend further for your enjoyment and security upon the state governments under which you respectively live, and the *government paramount of the nation*, extending its influence over and beyond them all. And your Independence of Great-Britain, is qualified by a dependence upon this double object of your allegiance. Under these several provisos, or with these modifications and restrictions, is imparted to the American people whatever of Independence they possess. And, in all conscience, this is *enough*, if it could be preserved from further limitation and curtailing.

BUT who shall limit and curtail the Independence of these States? Shall any *foreign power* dare to interpose in their internal concerns, and wheedle them out of so precious a possession? No. It is not probable, to my judgment at least, that their Independence is endangered either from the *secret intrigues* or *open assaults* of any of the belligerent nations. According to my conceptions of things, it is equally idle to suppose the citizens of the United States will submit to the

domination of France, or surrender their treaties and charters and be re-annexed to England. It heats my blood, and disturbs the moderation of my temper, so determined am I for Independence, even to hear people talk hypothetically about the loss of it, or conceive in imagination that such an event is possible.

IF that Independence should ever fail, which God of his infinite grace and mercy avert! the failure will arise from *their own misconduct*. And there appear but *two* sources whence such an evil may be dreaded; these are the *inordinate appetite for wealth*, and what naturally flows from it, the *gradual incroachments on the rights of persons*.

AND first, *of the lust after property*. A certain amount of the things of this world, is necessary to every creature that inhabits it. The wants of man are more numerous than those of any other animal. To supply these, a large portion of his talents and industry are bestowed. But the mere supplying of the *wants* of nature, is by no means sufficient for him. Man has a faculty of mind denominated *taste*; and this exercises itself in contriving the *conveniencies and ornaments* of living. The houses, furniture, dress, food, drink and equipage, of people in civilized society, and more especially in what is called polite life, bear a thousand marks of this. In providing the means of gratifying these few natural, and this incalculable number of artificial or acquired wants, it is soon discovered by the collector of wealth, that *money is power*; that power gives the possessor of it *importance*, and that *importance begets respect*. Large property creates numerous and extensive dependences in others, upon

him to whom it belongs; and gives him a right or pretext under *color of law*, to controul or direct their wills. He, in some measure, affords them subsistence, and of course at the time of an election he can influence their votes.—*Talents*, or high endowments of mind, also confer on their possessor, power. But these are rarities that fall to the lot of comparatively a few; while there are scarcely any capacities so weak or ordinary, as not to be adequate to the *acquisition of property*. They, therefore, who cannot succeed by the difficult acquisition of *superior understanding*, find it frequently in their power to accomplish their views by the amassing of silver and gold. The power of these engines in the hands of a cunning man, is immense. They give him a standing and consideration in society, which neither his education, manners, virtue nor experience anywise entitle him to.

THE many advantages attendant on wealth, invite multitudes of competitors for the favors of fortune; and the procuring of a large amount of what is termed “this world’s goods,” grows to be the ruling passion of the mind. Wealth is no longer considered as the means of ministering to the wants and comforts of life; it is fought after as the instrument of power. Each vies with his neighbor, who shall become most powerful by its aid, until the passion degenerates into the most *fordid avarice*. Of the remarkable effects of republican avarice, the late aristocratic governments of the United Netherlands and of Venice afford sad, though instructive examples.—Thus the reason is plain wherefore the thirst of wealth is so insatiable in *free governments*. Let the commercial and treasure-hunting citizens of *Columbia* ponder on these things, and beware!

—The prophet Ezekiel wept over the mercantile successes of Tyrus; if the good man was to visit the seaports of America, would he not behold equal matter for lamentation? Yet the voice of the people and their government is loud and unanimous for commerce. Their inclinations and habits are adapted to trade and traffic. From one end of the continent to the other, the universal roar is, Commerce! Commerce! at all events, Commerce!—Peace, citizens, you shall have it, and together with it the probable hazard of yellow fever, warfare, monied influence.

SECONDLY. *Of the violations of the rights of persons.* The ancient doctrine of common law, was, that the person of the subject should be considered sacred, except on the commission of crimes. And in no instance before the granting of Magna Charta, was the arresting of the person permitted for non-performance of a civil contract. Such is the venerable law of the land; and that great bulwark of our liberties declares, among other things, that no freeman shall be *imprisoned* but by the law of the land. Yet, notwithstanding the practice of the English nation for ages, and the declaration of Magna Charta to the contrary, the Parliaments, yielding to the prevailing mercantile notions, agreed that the taking of the goods or other property of a debtor, was not a full satisfaction to the creditor; and after a variety of expedients, the voice of a commercial nation grew too strong and loud to be resisted, that the creditor might *arrest the person* of the man who owed him money, and *deprive him of his liberty*, until he gave securities for answering, or for liquidating the demand. Thus was the *freedom of the subject* considered of less importance than a small sum of money,

and a regard to the *rights of Kings* preferred to the solemn and inviolable reverence *formerly* shewn to the *rights of persons*. From England, whose statute laws were once the laws of *this land*, the Americans borrowed the practice of depriving a fellow creature of his freedom for failing to discharge a civil obligation, even when not charged with any design to deceive. And although the stable doctrine of the common law leans as strongly against the practice here as in England, still *our* legislatures have as little hesitation as *their* parliaments, to innovate upon the ancient practice by statute, and to consider it lawful, that a freeman, a citizen of a free and republican government, one of the sovereign people, might be deprived of his franchise, obstructed in the exercise of his civil and social duties, and reduced to a state of imprisonment which is a species of slavery; and *all this* without the commission of any crime or suspicion of having disturbed the peace of society, because, having been indebted to his neighbor in a sum of money, he had not been punctual in the payment of it! The manly and independent spirit of our Saxon ancestors would never have endured this! They loved money less, and liberty more, than their descendants.

If the citizens of free governments treat their fellow citizens in the manner just described, there can be no wonder that they should reduce to their entire subjection the persons and wills of others when they conveniently could. The ancient republicans were remarkable for the number of slaves they kept, and many of the citizens no less remarkable for the severity and cruelty with which they treated them. Even the moderate and benevolent Cicero, who has writ-

ten so many fine things concerning the rights, duties, and privileges of man, composed these very pieces amidst a household of slaves: and, after his example, we need not be surprized to find so many sturdy republicans and fierce supporters of liberty and equality, thinking themselves perfectly justifiable in subjecting the natives of Africa and their descendants to uncontroled dominion, and in buying and selling them like the beasts of the field. They who are apprehensive of overgrown and wide-spreading tyranny in governments, would act consistently if they would extirpate the roots and scyons of it which sprout up in their own families. It would better become the dignity of a free and enlightened people to act otherwise than is frequently done among us towards imprisoned debtors and other slaves. One evil paves the way to another. If these aggressions of the rights of persons are persisted in, more and more may be expected in the progress of society. Some of you may, on an alledged critical state of public affairs, be impressed for seamen, and all of you deprived of the benefit of the habeas corpus act.

It is by bringing to mind annually, at appointed times and appropriate places, the dangers which threaten the liberties of mankind, *secretly* as well as *openly*, that the genuine temper of freedom is to be preserved. I have, therefore, discoursed to my audience, at this time, with less ornament and less flattery than it was in my power to have employed. But I did not come here to deliver you a speech full of flourishes and declamation. I came to talk to my fellow citizens about Independence, in which was involved some of the failings and imperfections of a

republican government; a form of government which is, nevertheless, preferable upon the whole, by a great difference, to any other devised by the wisdom of man. And to this, in *substance* as well as in *form*, it will be happy if the citizens of these states shall determine to adhere, improving and amending as they go along. For they may be assured, that *virtue* is the foundation and rock upon which a republic ought to be built; and, that a government erected on such a basis will be enabled to withstand all the winds and the floods which may assail it; while every other superstructure, founded upon any other bottom than of virtue, is as unstable as sand, and will immediately be washed away. In speaking on these subjects, I have expressed myself in love and tenderness, even as if I was disclosing some blemish in the character or conduct of my dearest connection. Bear with me then, and endeavour with *me* to profit by the considerations offered. Remember the *day of Independence*, and keep it strictly. Bear in mind the practice of the people of Syracuse. “After the
 “Syracusans had obtained their celebrated victory
 “over the Athenians, a tree was hung round with
 “arms by way of trophy. This formality was an-
 “nually repeated in Syracuse in commemoration of
 “their deliverance, and the custom has descended
 “from generation to generation for more than twen-
 “ty-two hundred years! The solemn procession,
 “which used to be held in former days, has indeed
 “ceased; but a tree is erected on the first of May
 “before the senate-house, and during the whole
 “month no man is allowed to arrest a debtor. And,
 “until lately, those citizens who were at that time
 “under arrest were set free, that they might partake

“ of the public joy, and endeavor to satisfy their “ creditors.”—May the *tree of Independence*, which was planted in America in 1776, thrive with perennial and unfading verdure, and afford to all the generations to come the shade of tranquility and the fruit of happiness! But that it may do this, you must take care that no enemy or false friend assail it, but some of the most expert and skilful among yourselves must take in hand the pruning-hook, and trim off a portion of its wild and wanton luxuriance. It will stand the better and live the longer, for having some of its burthensome overgrowth lopped away. *Thus will it transcend all other trees in vigor and beauty.*

RALLY round it, then, and with one accord determine, that the foreign or hostile invader, who shall but touch a twig or leaf of it, shall suffer the severest punishment that can be inflicted by REPUBLICAN VENGEANCE.



"of the public joy, and endeavor to bring their
 "virtues"—May the love of labor, which
 was planted in America in 1787, drive with power
 and undiminished verdure, and extend to all the
 nations to whom the shade of its wings and the
 fruit of its harvest shall be sent. But that it may do this, you
 must take care that no enemy or false friend shall
 but some of the most expert and faithful among your
 laborers shall take in hand the pruning-hook, and in the
 off a portion of its wild and weedy branches, it
 will stand the better and the longer, and the
 more of its fruitfulness it will produce. I
 You will be treated all over in a
 happy manner.

It may seem a little odd, and with one
 may, that the laborer or holder of the soil
 should have a right to sell or to buy the
 instrument that can be called by
 VINCENNA

